

In my desperate search to create something from my pain and turn my pain into healing, I have found my mother's old blog that showcases my family's trip to China in 2008. While I have just come to understand why I was there, I now know that trip was my superhero origin.

A little 8-year-old, autistic child did things he never should have been able to. Remember, as the eagles stir among the nest, so does God stir among the nations. He brings us to the brink of death only to lift us from perdition. From eternal darkness. In those wonderful trials, we garner a greater appreciation for what we are made for. I cannot tell you what we are made for. I know I am made for such a time as this. Are you?

MONDAY, JUNE 9, 2008

Traveling To The Land of The Rising Sun

We are preparing to leave for China in the coming days. Lists have been made, checked, and rechecked. The question still remains, "Have we prepared for everything?"

I have begun to allow my mind to go to the: "Worst Possible Scenario."

- letter comes from a government agency, I miss the deadline
- my business implodes on itself
- my staff quits
- my "wifi" cell phone does not work abroad

But as YODA states: "Name must your fear be before banishing it you can."

So since "Action may not always bring happiness, but there is no happiness without action." (Benjamin Disraeli) we are off on an adventure I never planned...so at this point I am just closing my eyes and going with it. Geronimo!

Posted by [Shanyn Stewart](#)
at [6/09/2008 11:51:00 PM](#)

THURSDAY, JUNE 12, 2008

Less is More

Today is the day that we are laying out everything that most goes into a suitcase for the trip. {LOL, LOL}

It is laughable! Every travel suggestion I have read says, "Less is More." The thought of taking only what you need is a wonderful idea. However, traveling to a foreign country, where you do not speak the language and can not ask for what you need is a frightening thing.

Will we need a first aid kit? How many pairs of shoes? My feet are huge - the Chinese are known for their small feet. Can we just buy shampoo there? What if I can not find

my brand - do I really want my hair to be forever immortalized in our family photo albums due to lack of proper products?

These things are trivial in the grand scheme of life I know. But the thoughts cross your mind and lead you to ponder even further on the term, "Less is More."

Less is more, traveling light. A good lesson for us all...to not allow the things of this world to weigh us down.

Posted by [Shanyn Stewart](#)
at [6/12/2008 11:36:00 PM](#)

MONDAY, JUNE 23, 2008

Going in Favor

As many of you know this trip was blanketed in prayer and the blood of Jesus. As the date came closer I began to pray that God would grant us a favor. Despite the delay at the airport, and the fact that I put Don's cell phone on seasonal before we left (bad mistake) we had several blessings that appeared on our 22 hour journey.

On the plane from Detroit - which was delayed on the runway for over an hour - I had the opportunity to sit next to a young man (probably my age LOL) who was going to be on our connecting flight to Beijing as well. I peered at the paperwork he was reviewing and saw that he was reading a term paper on "wealth management" - came to find out he was a professor in the U.S. who taught finance and economics at a Virginia University. I read several of his students' works and explained the difference between the textbook examples and the "real" world. It was amazing to me that even though he had never actually managed wealth - he was attempting to teach our young people the principles of management.

Then we had the most delightful conversation on the changing economic condition of China and the U.S. He really helped to clear up some of my concerns of going to Asia. He explained that he moved to the U.S. 4 years ago and as he continued to return home to China he was happy to see that the mind and heart of China was changing. We talked about the pollution issues - and how any industrialized country goes through the growing pains of progress.

As we landed at our lay-over we said goodbye and I was happy to have made a friend. Then as we "RAN " to catch our next flight - that we almost MISSED! We had a pleasant surprise. As we waited in line with the other 500 passengers boarding an older business man came up and introduced himself - he was very pleasant. During our flight he came to check on us several times and when we landed in Beijing he explained where we had to go and what to expect.

Meeting these people in my eyes were divine appointments....we were very scared going to a foreign land where we did not speak the language, however, meeting these strangers helped us to relax and take in the experience.

Posted by [Shanyn Stewart](#)
at [6/23/2008 09:41:00 AM](#)

MONDAY, JUNE 23, 2008

Welcome to Asia

Before we left the plane I thought that perhaps the windows of the plane were just foggy, however, that was not the case. The fog was not on the windows, the fog was not that at all - it was a haze of pollution that hung in the air.

What amazed me when I stepped off of the plane was that I had to take a moment to catch my breath. As many of you know, I have struggled with Asthma for many years. It was hot, humid, and a smell that I can not describe hung in the air.

When we arrived in Beijing I was a little taken back to say the least. The airport is brand new, and very modern. In fact it is one of the largest buildings in the world. It is very clean, bright....and HOT! I do not believe that it is air conditioned...or it was not keeping up with the mid-90 degree heat wave.

Yes, we had to arrive on the hottest day of the year!

I was surprised by the friendly attendants throughout the airport. In the restrooms, elevators, trains, etc. Most of them speak broken English and there are English signs throughout the airport.

I just wish someone would have told me about the lack of Western Toilets! My children refused to use the restroom until I found one equipped with something they could recognize.

Immigration and customs were not as horrible as I thought they might be...in fact they did not really question our documents. However, when we arrived we had to register with the local police station within 24 hours since we were not staying at a hotel. I was surprised by this, however, my father explained that even in the U.S. if visitors arrive on a foreign visa they too must register with the police, however, it is not enforced.

We decided not to tackle taking a bus to our destination in the city and hired two taxis to take us to my father's home. Unlike the U.S. they do not wear seatbelts or require child seats. The kids were freaked out. As many of you know little Donny is a black and white rules type of kid...the fact that the cars were not equipped with seat belts kind of threw him off. The rules are the rules, and everyone must follow themand he expects to enforce the rules. So....We shoved him into the car despite his protests and were on our way.

And the culture shock begins.

Donny really has a hard time adapting to change and Big Don is not much different. The last comment Don made to me on the airplane....was "your lucky I love you." I just smiled, and said, "you said you would follow me halfway around the world when you married me." I guess he did. :)

Posted by [Shanyn Stewart](#)
at [6/23/2008 10:18:00 AM](#)

_____ -

The Golden Arches



Thank Goodness McDonalds is everywhere! The children are surviving by eating McDonalds every morning! They fill up for the day and enjoy PB&J and melon for dinner.

I wish that they would try the local cuisine, however, they have not worked up the courage yet.

When we go into the rural countryside the adjustment might be a hard one for them. They have already gone through most of their snacks - it is going to be a long month for them.

Posted by [Shanyn Stewart](#)
at [6/24/2008 07:50:00 AM](#)



TUESDAY, JUNE 24, 2008

Seeing in The Dark

Picture in your mind's eye - the "pay at the pump" gas station. You put your credit charge in and prepay for your gasoline.

Now picture that the electric in your home here is just like that "pay at the pump" credit card machine.

That is where our story begins: We have been running since we arrived, and no one remembered that now that the air conditioner is on that the house would be using more electricity....and around 6 p.m. last night we realized that the "power low" light was flashing BRIGHT RED on the electric meter! And oops....we did not recharge the prepaid card to insert into the electric meter to pay for the electric. So we went into electric conservation mode.

We turned off the air, t.v. and most of the lights - it gave me an excuse to make the children go to bed at a reasonable time.

We estimated that the electricity should go off by 1:30 a.m. - I began to pray that we would not lose any power....at 8:30 a.m. we were able to recharge the card at the local service center....we never lost power - it was like the oil that Elisha gave to the widow - it just stretched and stretched.

Favor, Favor all around.

Posted by [Shanyn Stewart](#)
at [6/24/2008 07:58:00 AM](#)

TUESDAY, JUNE 24, 2008

Hungry for Chinese?

Today we went to Wang Fu Jing (The Knight Market), the biggest tourist attraction for shopping in Beijing. We spent the day shopping in all of the new/modern shops.

Many of the "old" cities are being torn down to make room for the modern shops. However, we found a little alley behind the new buildings into the "old" city.

Personally, I would rather see the "old" Beijing - the culture and people.

It was around lunch time and we were really hungry. So we looked for a little restaurant that we all would enjoy.

If you have ever been to the Orient you will recognize a certain smell that floats in the air. It is almost a spicy smell, much like a soy sauce smell.

I think you either love it or hate it. However, regardless of the smell the children were very hungry - so wanting to experience authentic Chinese cuisine we found this vendor that sold...deep fried sea horses...

We took a picture...then decided to eat at KFC Chicken instead! Seeing the Sea Horses and Scorpions on a stick was authentic cuisine!



Posted by Shanyn Stewart at 6/24/2008 10:47:00 PM

THURSDAY, JUNE 26, 2008

Your Friendly Neighborhood Spiderman

We went to Tai Yuan where the "locals" ' shop wholesale yesterday. I learned where all the purses, sunglasses and everything you find in New York City's Chinatown comes from. In one building there were 6 floors of vendors. It is much like a U.S. Flea Market - however they sell in bulk for others to resale elsewhere.

Here in China they batter everything. You want a bottle of water, you batter, you want a Barbie doll, you batter. Little Donny was a little taken back by it all. First, it is very overwhelming because there are so many people. Then we stick out like a sore thumb. And everyone stares or comes up to us and wants to take our picture!

Donny did not understand all of the talking/yelling that went with battering. He believed we would find something and just buy it. When we went up to a toy vendor and began battering and then just walked away appearing to be mad and uninterested - he melted down. He thought that they would not sell us something because we were Americans. He started yelling at the vendor - "You're just being mean to us, because we are Americans.

We had to get out of the store - however, even outside in the street the children were overwhelmed because of all the people. We decided that it would just be best that Don and Dad take the kids home and Min and I would continue to shop.

Spiderman to the Rescue

What we did not realize was that I took the backpack that had the house key in it. So when they arrived home - about a 1/2 hour drive they were locked out.

No worries. Thankfully the house is only on the second floor! Don crawled up a pipe on the side of the building, onto a little ledge, and into a bedroom window.

The Chinese women that sat outside ran up to us when we arrived and told me, "two seconds." Meaning that Don scaled up the side of the building in two seconds. When we came back outside that evening everyone was pointing at Don and talking - that was more excitement then the old ladies had seen all week!

Kate and Dora are now calling him Spiderman! However, Donny lectured his father that climbing up a wall is not "thinking safety."

Posted by Shanyin Stewart at 6/26/2008 04:39:00 AM



THURSDAY, JUNE 26, 2008

The Main Attraction

I had told the children that people might stare at us because they are not used to seeing Westerners, however, I was not prepared for being bombarded by people with cameras and wanting to touch us as we came off of the airplane in Beijing.

When we stepped off the plane we were literally surrounded by fifty teenage girls with camera phones out. Flash bulbs were popping and people were pointing and waving. Talk about being the "Main Attraction at the Zoo."

In a sea of black hair and black eyes - our children with lighter brown hair, fair skin, and lighter brown eyes are stared at wherever we go. Kate with her curly hair draws attention and all of the girls and women want to touch her.

Kate is loving the attention, however, Donny in his "proper ways" thinks that it is rude to point and stare and tells them as if they understand him.

Every new place we go - people will join in our family photo - just to have a picture with Westerners. It cracks me up! My father taught me to say "don't touch" to keep the people from touching the children.

Yes, that is a local jumping into our family photo as her family took her picture with us!

The culture here is very touchy - and as many of you know - I do not like to be touched or hugged. I have a defined personal space that I enjoy having respected. That personal space does not exist here. First there is no room for personal space, second, it is the culture for women to hold hands, and caress each other as a sign of friendship...nothing more.

All of the women here carry umbrellas. They do not use sunscreen, but see it as a social symbol to have fair skin. Having fair skin means that you do not have to do manual labor and have the status to stay out of the sun.

So we bought the children umbrellas (\$1.00 U.S.) in hopes of keeping the sun off of them and to keep people walking by from staring. We thought perhaps we would blend in. Not! The people just simply would bend down and look under the umbrellas as the children rode in strollers...getting even closer to the children.

Posted by Shanyn Stewart at 6/26/2008 05:08:00 AM



Give A Man A Fish

Peering into a Coy Pod I explained that back in the U.S. these large "gold" fish could be valued at \$1,000 to \$10,000. An older Chinese woman with me was confused....

"Why would you want fish you could not eat?"

Good question. However, I had no good answer.

I laid awake last night, reviewing the day and our adventure....and pondering the old woman's question. Why do we as Americans require so many things?

One of my friends said that I would come back a changed person and as we travel and see how people live and move about in this country - I do see myself looking inward more. Reflecting on our standard of living and why we do the things we do.

A few weeks ago I heard a sermon on "giving things up." That perhaps we had too much "stuff" in our lives and that it was crowding out the work the Lord has for us. Don and I at lunch after church were discussing the sermon - and I asked, "what do you think we have that is excessive? what do you think we could give up?" We both thought, and thought, and the only thing that we could think of was the premium cable we enjoyed. I mean we do not want to give up things that make us more comfortable, do we? After all, in our eyes we do not live very high, at least by America's standards.

Its funny, I asked Don this morning, "what do you think we could give up?" His reply without too much thought - "a lot." Our perception of what is necessary has changed. We have only been here a short time, however, we see that much of what we do creates more stress than pleasure.

The children notice it too. At home the lights go out and we jump to start the generator. They have learned here sometimes the lights go out or the internet is not available and there is nothing to do but wait. Little Donny says he realizes how "blessed" he is.

As we have traveled and seen the old and new Beijing we have seen that the older people here are happy even with less. I see the younger generations with the same focus and want as Americans.

In a country that has only been under this leadership for a few decades, things are changing very quickly. They have a saying here, "here today, gone tomorrow." In the eyes of a watching world we expect China to be as "civilized" as our own. However, we fail to realize that progress takes time. If we were to look back over our own country's history we see regrettable behavior and actions - errors of judgment and prejudice...even today.

We do what we do with what we know. And when we know better, we do better.



FRIDAY, JUNE 27, 2008

Modern Day Rain Dance

Here in Beijing, it rains about 5 days per year because it is positioned between two mountain ranges alongside a desert.

One night it sounded like live fireworks, however, it was explained that they were shooting dry ice high into the sky to generate rain. Modern day rain dance.

In an effort to reduce pollution they have planted thousands of trees, and trees and grass need water. So due to the lack of rain they have begun seeding the clouds to make it rain.

Cloud seeding, a form of weather modification, is the attempt to change the amount or type of precipitation that falls from clouds, by dispersing substances into the air that serve as cloud condensation or ice nuclei, which alters the microphysical processes within the clouds. The substances used usually include silver iodide and dry ice (frozen carbon dioxide).

Posted by Shanyn Stewart at 6/27/2008 07:37:00 PM

SUNDAY, JUNE 29, 2008

Going to China to Play In The Dirt

Wherever you find a dirt pile - you can bet that children will find an adventure. This dirt pile outside the apartment complex is left over from a new road they have put in. The local children come equipped with kitchen spoons and pails to build castles and play "King of the Mountain."

There is no language barrier when it comes to playing in the dirt.

Posted by Shanyn Stewart at 6/29/2008 12:07:00 PM



SATURDAY, JULY 5, 2008

Walmart, Walmart Everywhere

Welcome to China, and yes, you will find two Wu Mart's in Beijing. However, when we visited the Global chain I was a bit surprised.

Unlike the well kept, brightly lit super stores of the U.S., Wu Mart is a flash-back of a bad version of KMart. It is dim, dirty, and hot. If there were any deals we did not find any. The two items we wanted to purchase - were missed marked at the check out and I decided not to waste my money.

Oh, did I tell you that in the city that plastic bags are not given out - you can purchase them for 4 RMB each...so bring your own bags.

A couple of interesting points. If you go outside most apartment complexes the Wu Mart bus runs every 20 minutes to take you to the store and home again. The buses are dirty and old...and have no air conditioning. However, McDougalls (McDonalds) is right next to Walmart so we ride the bus to McDonalds and ride it home -

Another shopping option that is much nicer than Walmart is the Lotus Store. Their bus will also pick you up four times per day for free, providing clean and air conditioned transportation. The Lotus store is a little more expensive, however, it is cleaner, brighter, and a nicer experience. (Sorry no cameras were allowed. The kids pose for a picture outside.)

Did I mention that Walmart is unionized here in China?

Posted by Shanyn Stewartat 7/05/2008 04:33:00 PM

SUNDAY, JULY 6, 2008

Chop Stick Wars

One thing we learned really fast upon our arrival is that we should have practiced more with Chopsticks! You can readily find strange looking soup spoons, however, other silverware is hard to find.

On this day, a family friend took us out to dinner at a real Chinese restaurant. When dining with the Chinese, be prepared for them to order way too much food as a way to impress you, and of course they pick up the tab. Don't even offer to pay - as it is an honor to treat you to dinner out. We had a lot of fun - it took us forever to eat because we could not get the hang of picking up the food.

Even the children have started to use chopsticks. We had a lot of food left over, they are still picky eaters. The restaurant packaged the food to go - however, not in the traditional Chinese paper boxes we are used to - no they use ziploc plastic bowls!

Posted by Shanyn Stewartat 7/06/2008 01:02:00 PM



SUNDAY, JULY 6, 2008

Learning the Way, Part 1

No Tipping: no one receives a tip here in China. However, even without a tip, customer service is a priority.

Taxi's: Many taxi drivers only want four passengers - many will not stop if they see more than four passengers. If you are in a large group - split up and walk ahead so the drivers do not think you are together. Many drivers will also refuse to turn on the air conditioning as they think it wastes gas. Carry a map with you - even if you can speak to them in Chinese many will act like they do not know where they are going to get more money out of you. If you think that you have been ripped off and know about how much it will cost - just pay them that and tell them to call the traffic police...they won't because if they are taking advantage of you the police will confiscate their automobile.

Customer Service: wherever you go, the grocery store, WuMart, Lotus, the gym, there is a customer service representative waiting for you at the door. No, they do not earn a commission, their job is to make your shopping experience a pleasant one. Too tired to walk, sit, have a Coke and they will bring you things you might like to purchase. At

restaurants, including McDonalds you do not carry your own tray or put it into the trash when you are finished...there is someone for that. And do not try to do it yourself, they will get offended and think you are trying to put them out of a job!

(notice in this picture all of the people in red shirts - these are attendants)

Buyer Beware: Now that China belongs to the " " there has been a crack down on fake merchandise. However, if you are shopping and bartering then after a time the clerk will bring out the counterfeit merchandise....just like ChinaTown in NYC - where walls become doors. It is also good to have a Chinese guide or have the ability to bargain in Chinese as you will get a better price. As well, if you are shopping at a "mall" then you give your merchandise to the clerk serving you - they in turn give you a receipt. You take the receipt to the cashier and pay for your purchases - you then take the stamped receipt back to your clerk and she ties all of your purchases together for you. P.S. If you want a bag, bring your own.

Tour Guide: If you have a tour guide bear in mind that they will receive a kickback from the shopkeepers and private drivers you use. If while bartering the shopkeeper is using a calculator you will notice that they show the tour guide the calculator first, then they push a button and show you - that is the deal they are cutting with your guide to bring customers in.

Watch Your Step: Watch your step for several reasons. First, broken concrete, or uncovered manholes exist as you walk down the street. Second, the men here have a terrible habit of clearing their throats and spitting...anywhere. Third, people think nothing of stopping going to the bathroom in the middle of the street. My father states that these are countryside people who have not been instructed otherwise...it is almost too much to handle - The toddlers and infants have split pants so they can just squat and relieve themselves...no need for diapers.

House Shoes and House Clothes: I know understand why when you arrive home you immediately take off your shoes and put on shoes only to where in the house and you remove your street clothes because the pollution leaves a layer of grime - you do not want to dirty your furniture so you put on lounging clothes at home.

Toilet paper: take your own wherever you go as the bathrooms do not have their own supply

Bathrooms: you will be lucky to find a Western toilet. When in doubt head to McDonalds they usually have one. Beware of the smell even in clean restrooms as many do not have proper ventilation. However, you will always see an attendant there to assist.

Posted by Shanyn Stewartat 7/06/2008 02:10:00 PM



SUNDAY, JULY 6, 2008

Walking in the Shadow of the Wall

The Chinese love to build walls. The Great Wall was built to stop invaders, Garden Walls to divide their crops, and Community Walls to section off housing complexes.

One thing that we have noticed is that these walls serve more than just the purpose of keeping people in or out, they also provide shade from the hot summer sun.

Thus, you find that people find their way throughout the city...walking in the shadow of the walls.

Posted by Shanyyn Stewart at 7/06/2008 06:04:00 PM



SUNDAY, JULY 6, 2008

Only a Mother Knows

If you look at the pictures of Kate at Walmart you will see at the bus stop that she has her shoes on the wrong feet. She had been playing in the playground at McDonalds and we had to run to catch our bus...and her shoes ended up on the wrong feet.

A mother passing by noticed her shoes and stopped me to fix them! Twenty people had already passed us by - yet a mother always notices.

Posted by Shanyyn Stewart at 7/06/2008 06:05:00 PM

FRIDAY, JULY 18, 2008
Walking A Slower Pace

In the month that we have been here we have learned to walk at a slower pace. Life without email, Internet, or television. Actually, we adapted quicker than I thought we would. Time spent as a family during the day as we explored the region, playing games in the evenings and reading has made up the bulk of our time.

We have also learned to walk a little slower, more purposefully - taking in all that is around us instead of hurrying everywhere - in fear that we would miss the details.

Posted by Shanyyn Stewart at 7/18/2008 08:12:00 PM



FRIDAY, JULY 18, 2008
Traveling Like A China-men

When we arrived in China we were determined to experience China like the people who live here. It would have been easy to hire a driver each day that we went out into the city, however, we wanted the children to realize that life here is different than in America.

So, we ventured out to ride the city bus daily, walking a mile to catch the bus. The children learned a lesson in patience as we waited, and waited for buses to arrive to carry us sometimes to another bus stop only to change buses to reach our final destination.

As the above picture of the Beijing bus station shows, there are no formal lines in China to board a bus. Those that are most aggressive race to get a place on the bus. So the children learned to push their way to the front of the crowd to make sure we were able to get onto the already crowded bus. However, they also learned quickly that they only needed to say "hello" and the sea of people would part and let them through as the people were shocked to see Westerners riding the bus.

They learned that people would get out of their seats to give their seat to a child, as children are revered in this country where most families only have one child.

And some days we ventured into the subway. Much newer, and cleaner than most U.S. subways. Again, the herd of people would part and let the children through - we followed close behind. We have all learned a valuable lesson, that public transportation is not always easy. Not having your own transportation (other than an electric bicycle) limits the scope of your world.

Posted by Shanyn Stewart at 7/18/2008 08:41:00 PM



FRIDAY, JULY 18, 2008

Cold Water, Please

Everything to drink in China is served hot. Even bottled water is not refrigerated. If you go into a restaurant and ask for water, they bring you a

cup of boiling hot water. If you ask for cold water, they look at you as if you are crazy....why?

The Chinese believe that drinking cold water and other beverages upsets your stomach. One day Kate had a stomach ache - from all the candy her grandfather had permitted her to eat - however, an older woman lectured me in Chinese for several minutes that it was because I allowed the children to drink cold bottles of water.

And yes, they serve Coca-Cola warm as well.
Posted by Shanyn Stewartat 7/18/2008 10:29:00 PM

Living Life By Design

FRIDAY, JULY 18, 2008
South China Sea

The kids had never seen the ocean, so our trip to the South China Sea was a new adventure for them. At first they did not want to go to the beach because we had to take a small boat over the natural sandbar to the beach.

Once we got over our fear of the dilapidated boat - we arrived safely at the ocean.

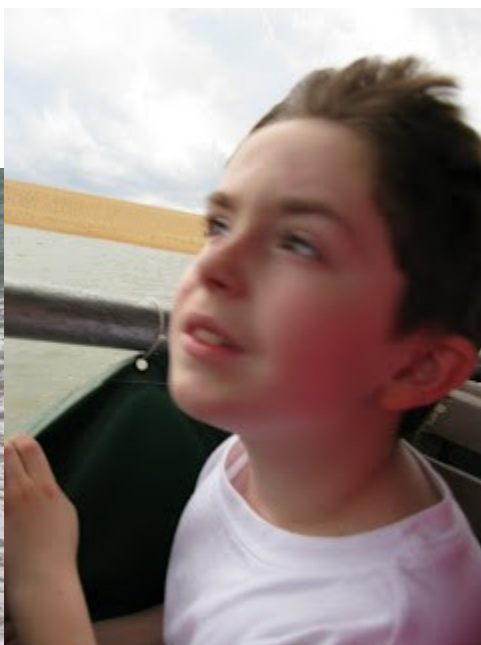
The kids tested the waters....

The kids built sand castles..

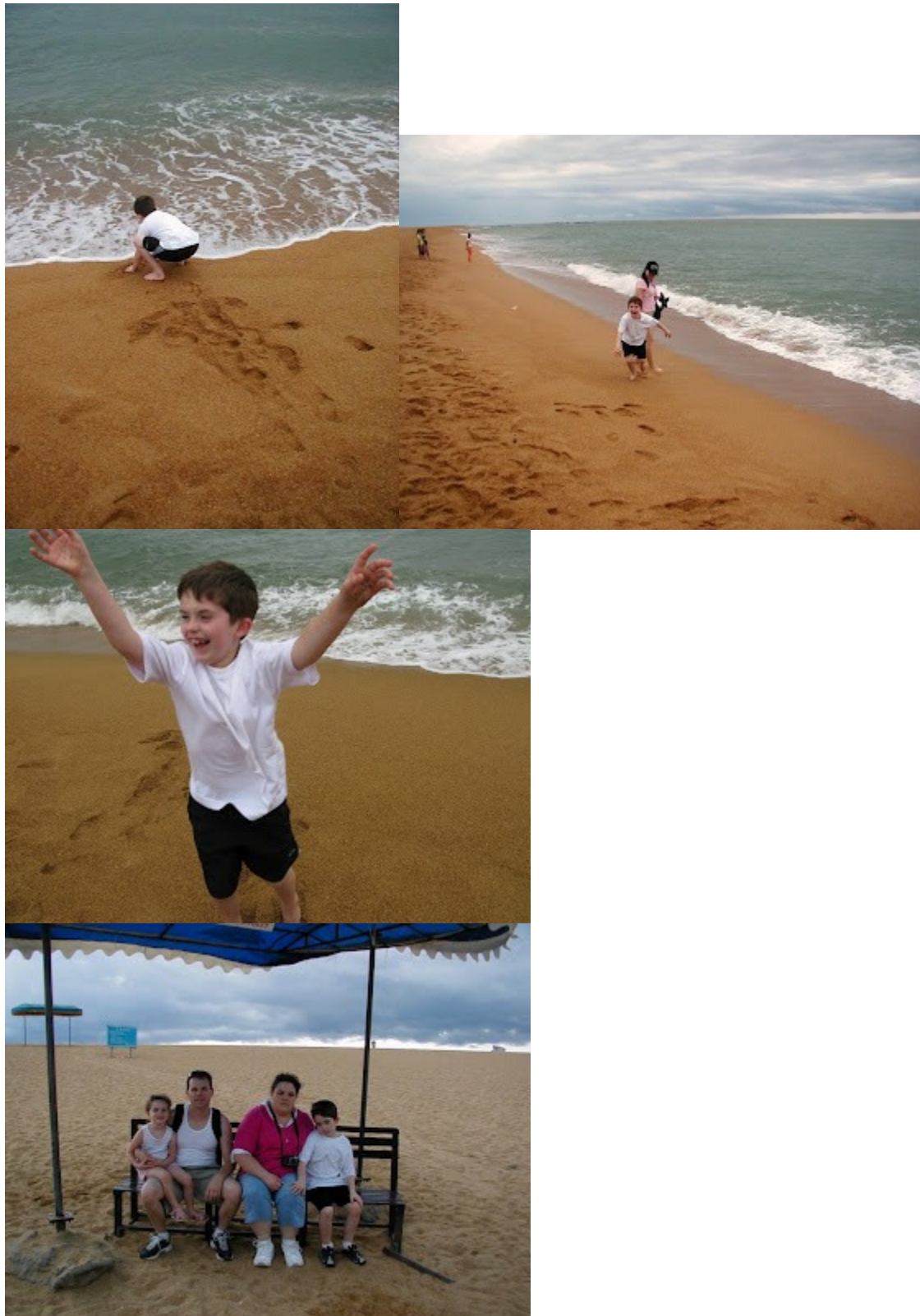
The kids hunted for sea shells...
The kids chased the waves...

No one wanted to leave, and all Kathryn kept asking was: "When can we go back to the ocean?" It reminded me of my first trip to Florida to Disney World at the age of four. I do not remember Disney, but I remember the ocean. I bet if you ask Kate about China, she will tell you about the ocean too.

Posted by Shanyn Stewartat 7/18/2008 10:46:00 PM







SUNDAY, JULY 20, 2008

American Businessman In China

The day that we visited TianAnmen Square we drew such a crowd that a guard had to come and break up the mayhem. You see a little boy posing with Kate -in front of them are hundreds of people with cameras popping!

After that day - Donny learned the value of his and Kate's smile. He is a businessman in training....he told me that he could meet the demands of the people and make money in the process (LOL). He learned that he could fetch a nice sum of money for their photos - and thus asked our friend to create a sign for him to hold when they were out - the sign reads in Chinese/English: American Businessman and Sister, Photos only 100 RMB -

Kate also realized after the day at the Square, where a Chinese father tried to pick her up for a photo - that she would prefer to sit in her stroller all buckled up so no one could pick her up again.

Posted by Shanyn Stewartat 7/20/2008 08:26:00 PM



MONDAY, JULY 21, 2008

Tibet Fashion Statement

This is the main living quarters, dinner table, and bed!

Yes, all beds in China are "hard as a rock!"

Posted by Shanyn Stewartat 7/21/2008 11:07:00 AM



TUESDAY, JULY 22, 2008

How Quickly We Adapt

After a little over thirty days the children started to communicate in Chinese. It was a flashback to my childhood when I was learning Spanish - and my father would only speak Spanish to me until I was fluent. Being in an environment where only Chinese was spoken helped the children to pick it up rather quickly. In fact, we had several people tell us how good our children's pronunciation was....like "real" Chinese they would say.

We learned about 25 characters, only 10,000 more to go! But we learned enough symbols to find restrooms, food, and entrances/exits. Along with roughly 50 words we began to carry small conversations on with the local people we would meet. The taxi drivers were always ready to practice their English on you - and you to practice their Chinese on them.

I was impressed with Donny on our last shopping trip. He asked the clerk in Chinese, "Can I see that one? How much does it cost? And are you kidding, that is too expensive!" And when the clerk would not deal any further, he turned on the tears...the clerk gave into Donny's offer of two pairs of tennis shoes for 100 RMB (\$14 USD) just to get the crying to stop and all of the other Chinese shoppers to stop ridiculing him for not dealing with the cute little "doll" boy.

When we come back home we plan on continuing our Mandarin Chinese lessons - on this trip it has become very apparent to me the business opportunities that exist for those that are fluent in Chinese and English. Each day in the China Daily newspaper there were countless advertisements for English/Chinese speaking businesspeople from major corporations like Motorola, Microsoft, and Krispy Kreme Donuts. (The Torch Building features gigantic television screens.)

In the statistics that I see China is quickly becoming the next financial powerhouse - and I plan on making sure that the children have the opportunity to learn the language to leverage themselves in their adult lives whether they are missionaries or business people learning a second language is something that will enhance their lives.

Posted by Shanyn Stewart at 7/22/2008 10:32:00 AM



TUESDAY, JULY 22, 2008

Donny Wanted a Pet, So I Took Him To Tibet

No, really I did not get him a pet, however, he did get a handcrafted wooden alligator during our trip. And a promise to get him a fish when we return home.

Posted by Shany Stewart at 7/22/2008 11:02:00 AM



TUESDAY, JULY 22, 2008
Change Please!

Buyer beware! After bartering and agreeing on a price, do not give the vendor large bills that require them to make change. Once they have your money they will want to do anything but give you the change.

They will sell you more merchandise or try to sell you batteries!

And keep in mind that they believe that all Westerners are wealthy. So a good phrase to learn is: "I live in Beijing, I make Beijing money - I won't pay more than the citizens here."

And beware, several times we heard in Chinese, "charge them more, they have 2 children." We would go in and pick out what we wanted, take pictures, and then have our Chinese friends go back and buy the product if we were encountering bartering difficulty, however, that seemed to be a rare thing.

Posted by Shanyn Stewart at 7/22/2008 11:35:00 AM



WEDNESDAY, JULY 23, 2008
Climbing the Great Wall

Since we have been in China we have seen the mountains that surround Beijing on two occasions - known as "Blue Sky Days" - the day we set out for the Great Wall was not one of those days. It was supposed to be a cool 89 degrees with a 50% chance of rain - so we decided to make our climb. The air was thick with humidity- as we made the two hour car ride to the Wall. The day started out like any other, walking to catch a bus to McDonald's, then a taxi to where buses departed for the wall - and then into a private taxi car for the two hour ride.

I had a vision of the Wall in my mind, we would climb a few flights of stairs then we would take a leisurely stroll along the wall - what the wall really was did not match my vision at all.

(in this picture, we are at the top all in white, this was the first part of the wall, an easy climb with handrails)

The Wall was built to keep invaders out - and thus it was rugged. The wall was not a leisurely stroll - it was a climb up a steep mountain. The wall is flat in parts - but mostly consists of steps up the side of the mountains. The steps meant to slow down invaders were not uniform in size, but varied from 20" to 6" each without handrails.

The climb up the wall started early in the morning. It was warm, and the clouds hung low on the wall. We breathed in the cloudy mist as we slowly made our ascent. As we climbed higher into the mountains the air became thicker and thicker. It started to sprinkle a few hours into our journey and

the steps became very slippery, making our journey slower, at points we climbed on our hands and knees up the wall so as not to fall.

What started as a sprinkle, however, soon turned into a torrential downpour, a monsoon rain. The steps soon became a waterfall of water that covered our climbing shoes, however, we could not stop our climb for fear we might be swept away - we had to push upward to a tower higher on the mountain.

It rained sheets down on us as we slowly made our way to a tower at a point on the wall - there we sat for over an hour waiting for the rain to slow enough for us to either climb higher or descend down the wall - we welcomed the wait as we were all exhausted from the climb.

(hiding from the rain)

I had only seen the Great Wall in text books - and today even though the climb was hard and we are all exhausted we have done what few people ever get to do or see -

"We Have Climbed the Great Wall."

Posted by Shanyn Stewart at 7/23/2008 10:38:00 PM



THURSDAY, JULY 24, 2008

Prayer at Tiananmen Square

As we stood in the Square - all that I could think of was the day in 1989 when a lone student stood off with the Government's Tanks. I explained to my children the significance of that student's act of bravery and that today we stand in that same spot - and we witness a freer China, a New China as a result.

That afternoon where that student lost his battle, but made strides to improve the lives of millions, we knelt for prayer. Thanking God that today He has a presence in this land that was closed for over fifty years.

On that fateful day on June 4, 1989 a lone student stopped the parade of tanks. Just like Esther in the Bible he stood up and showed that he was in fact created, "for such a time as this."

(Catholic Church in Beijing, China)

There seems to be much confusion on the stance the Central Government of China takes on religion. In visiting Chinese friends we see Bible's displayed in their homes, and learned that it is the Central Government's opinion that all Chinese are free to worship any religion that does not advocate the overthrow of the government. One of the fastest growing religions in China is Islam.

However, the people we meet all point out that just because the main government believes this way - the local/countryside government might interpret the law differently. Keeping in mind that China was religiously free until the 1940's when Chairman Mao came to power - I met many older Chinese Christians as the Catholic Church has a long history in the country.

One day while in 'Subway' we ran into a few American women and their children. In observing them we saw them stop to pray before their meal - at once I knew they were missionaries. We talked for a while and they admitted that it was easier to practice their faith in public, however, the Central Government did not readily issue Visas to 'missionaries' so many came in as business people.

We talked about the struggles and joys of the ministry. I related to their stories. While we traveled throughout China I really felt a spiritual quietness. One night I found myself in prayer asking God for his presence, just His peace. There seems to be a spiritual silence that hangs over the land, unlike anything I have ever felt before. I imagine that it is much like the 400 years of silence that we see between the Old and New Testaments.

I give the missionaries a lot of credit, to endure during silent times. They are seeing hearts and lives changed as people come to Christ, however, they admit that the country is far from the revival that is so desperately needed.

One thing that I clearly noticed is that children throughout the country are taught evolution as are our children in the United States. One thing that is quite disturbing is that since there has been no religious influence for the past fifty years - many of these individuals are lost....trapped by a curtain of darkness and unbelief.

In the same turn I see an opportunity for Christians to step up and make a positive difference in the lives of these children. Unlike the U.S. not every child has the opportunity to go to high school or college. In the eighth grade they take a placement test, if their scores are not high enough then they must choose a vocation like taxi driver or police officer, thus sealing their economic fate.

Several times during our trip we were approached by individuals who children did not pass the entrance exams - like all parents they want more for their children and asked if we could take their children back to the U.S. for schooling - or if we knew of any organizations that would provide foreign exchange so that their children could further their education. What an opportunity for Christian families to make a difference.

Posted by Shanyn Stewart at 7/24/2008 10:39:00 PM





SATURDAY, JULY 26, 2008
Fishy Spa and Pedicure (Made in China)

It was the strangest thing I ever saw - people paying big bucks to sit in a pool of water and allow little carps to eat away their dead skin, the Chinese swear by it.

Yuck! Then while watching the slingbox on Good Morning America I see the new craze sweeping the U.S.Fishy Pedicures!

Posted by Shanyin Stewart at 7/26/2008 01:17:00 AM



SATURDAY, JULY 26, 2008

Leaving the New China

"Zai jian" (good-bye) China, and "ni hao" (hello) America, as the United States is referred to in China.

We set out to create memories, and experience the true essence of China. We did not crunch on fried sea horses, or fried silkworms, however we ate a lot of rice even for breakfast: Memorable.

Attempting to speak Chinese with the right ethnic tone, using deliberate drawls when saying "dui, dui" (o.k. or right) as "dweai" and addressing our Papa as "Ya Ya" (grandfather): Memorable.

Looking for road signs and advertisements meant to be Western English but more like "Chinglish" - noticing the errors. Learning that the advertisement of "Western Food " really meant that the only thing Western about it was the name. Memorable.

Walking the noisy winding streets of Hou Hia at night or taking a Rickshaw ride: Memorable.

Learning to walk a hundred miles a day - or almost! Memorable.

Realizing that OSHA does not exist here - yet. Memorable.

That bamboo - is still used in buildings: Memorable.

The crazy traffic, and crowded streets: Memorable.

Seeing the farmers plant vegetables anywhere, including along the sidewalk and up the stairs. Memorable.

But ultimately, it is the people that we will remember.

The local farmer and his horse drawn cart that came by the house each day. The milk man who pulled his ice box by bicycle to deliver the day's milk.

The Farmers in their fields and rice patties.

The white gloved guard who stood at attention outside our complex throughout the day - emotionless by daylight, smiling at dusk, and quietly snoozing at midnight.

The food stall vendors selling deep fried beetles and corn on the cob.

The children eat "Green Pea" Popsicles, or "Corn" Popsicles.

The handicap boy who came by the house to collect all of the recyclables.

The children who want their pictures with our children.

Each of these individuals that we met never failed to engage us in their life story. Each of the million faces we saw daily had a story, a dream.

They love life, even the hardship of it. The people of Beijing take it all with stride, enduring through the tremendous change Beijing is experiencing as the "new" replaces the "old". However, one thing that seems to remain even with all of the change is a sense of community. A sense of who they are -a respect for people and land.

It is said that to understand your own world, you must immerse yourself in another. This past time in China has provided me with insight into who we are as Americans - the good, the bad, the hope and the dream. There are times that I look around at our own country and I see the sense of community fading away as we race towards the capitalist goal to thrive and survive in a global economy. I hope we always remember our roots, the men and women who gave us the freedoms we have today - and I pray that we do not give up all of our rights in the name of national security.

Posted by Shanyn Stewart at 7/26/2008 11:00:00 PM







